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Cooper-Church Fizzle

FOR MONTHS, the titanic drama of the Cooper-Church amendment absorbed the Senate, convulsed Washington, and covered the front pages with acres of breathless, though not deathless prose. Its final passage, by a narrow majority, was fulsomely saluted as a decisive triumph for the fashionable forces of neoisolationism. It was all very beautiful, all very moving.

After this positively Wagnerian clamor, one does not like to be deflationary. But common honesty compels the report that the Senate's passage of the Cooper-Church amendment has now turned out to be the super-non-event of 1970. The amendment is dead in conference—so dead that the House-Senate Conference Committee ceased to meet some time ago.

This was predictable, and was indeed predicted by one or two small and unheard voices, while the titanic drama was still in progress in the Senate. The real feelings of "the great rancid American people" (as the late Sam Blyth used to call us) are rather more accurately represented in the House than in the Senate.

THE HOUSE is also much more remote from the eloquence of editorial pages, whose kind words affect most senators as a dramatic critic's unlooked-for praise affects a broken down actor with dyed hair and bunions.

The House leaders were by no means intransigent. The chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Rep. Thomas Morgan of Pennsylvania, is a gentle, kindly man. He genuinely longed for a compromise that the House might conceivably approve. But in the Conference Committee, Representative Morgan had to deal with the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, J. W. Fulbright.

Senator Fulbright rather resembles Cato—except that instead of endlessly repeating, "Carthage must be destroyed," the Senator's pet theme (if you understand his speech-writers correctly) is that the United States

had better be destroyed. With Catonian sternness, the senator refused the smallest change in Cooper-Church's language to conciliate the House.

Senator Fulbright is said to be pleased by the deadlock, because he thinks it will kill the military sales bill, to which the Cooper-Church amendment was attached. But here, he is almost certain to be wrong.

WHEN THERE is deadlock over an amendment, an existing statute can always be renewed—without the amendment of course—by what is called a continuing resolution. A continuing resolution will eventually be introduced in the House, and will pass with hardly a dissenting vote. That leaves the Senate, which gave a majority to Cooper-Church. Logically, the Senate, ought to reject a military sales bill lacking even a token fragment of Cooper-Church.

But logic does not always apply. Cooper-Church contains money for beleaguered Israel, besides several of this country's more direct allies. And Israel, nowadays, is a very tender nerve for the liberal Democrats.

No wonder the nerve is tender! As events are increasingly proving, in a most terrible manner, Israel depends upon this country for her protection against the Soviet Union. To protect Israel against the Soviet Union, this country in turn depends upon its own military strength. Whoever dismantles America's military strength, in fact, dismantles Israel's ultimate line of defense.

Who, then, are the dismantlers? You would not logically expect the liberal Democrats to play this role. With the possible exception of Sen. Edward Kennedy no liberal Democrat gets less than 50 per cent of his campaign financing from the Jewish community. In certain cases, the percentage reaches a very much higher figure.

BUT IN REALITY, they are also the most active dismantlers of U.S. power; and the decline of our power has now reached the stage where

Israel's very survival is directly threatened by the Soviets. If Israel does not in fact survive—as is tragically imaginable today—the Americans chiefly responsible will be liberal Democratic senators and their supporters on the intellectual left.

A dim consciousness of these extremely grim but indisputable facts is beginning to percolate through liberal Democratic ranks in the Senate. Voting for a resolution continuing the military sales bill will at least be voting for money for Israel, even if it displeases Senator Fulbright.

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